Poquoson ready to celebrate 25th anniversary of city

By Greg A. Lohr
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POQUOSON

Get ready to sing. The city of Poquoson turns 25 today, and everyone's invited to its anniversary party this weekend.

Festivities begin tonight at City Hall, where the mayor will unveil a bay-themed sculpture that will remain in the building's foyer. Concerts, crafts, games and historical tours run Friday night through Saturday night, culminating with an Air Force Jazz Band concert at 8 p.m. and fireworks at 9:15.

The events celebrate not just the 25 years since Poquoson broke away from York County, but also the nearly 370 years Poquoson has been around as a Chesapeake Bay community.

AND MANY MORE ...

Poquoson will celebrate its 25th anniversary as a city tonight through Saturday night. For information, call 868-3000. Here are the scheduled events:

TONIGHT

Reception from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at City Hall. Free refreshments and entertainment.

- **6:30-7:** Matinee Idlers perform patriotic music.
- **7:** Welcome by City Manager Charles Burgess Jr. Mayor Gordon Helsel unveils a bronze sculpture and fountain display.
- **7:30-8:** Poquoson High School Brass Quintet performs.

FRIDAY NIGHT

Drive.

- **10 a.m.-6 p.m.:** Antique- and classic-car show; Poquoson Art League art show; applications for commemorative Poquoson license plates available.
- **11 a.m.-1 p.m.:** Battle of the bands.
- **11 a.m.-4 p.m.:** Free swimming at Municipal Pool for Poquoson residents.
- **11 a.m.-5 p.m.:** Two different tours of Poquoson's history, each 45 minutes long, starting on the hour.
- **11 a.m.-9 p.m.:** Food vendors and civic booths open; Girl Scout crafts on display; games include horseshoes and volleyball.

"We're honoring that tradition that started off with the watermen," said Marsha Jennings, chairwoman of the city's volunteer 25th Anniversary Planning Team.

Jennings said the planning group wanted Saturday's events in particular to feel like a big, family picnic for Poquoson residents, complete with swimming, food and the clinking and clanking of horseshoes.

"But anyone is welcome to join in," she said, "because we like to share our civic pride with our surrounding neighbors."

Poquoson was a part of York County until 1952, when it incorporated into a town to keep its high school — or at least to keep its students from having to travel to a new high school in northern York.

Poquoson's incorporation as a city in 1975 allowed its schools to continue separate from York's.

Much has changed in Poquoson in 25 years.

Officials estimate 7,084 people lived there in 1975. More than 11,000 call Poquoson home now. Three new stoplights on Wythe Creek Road recently ended Poquoson's era as a one-stoplight community.

The city does maintain some ties with York County — the two localities share courts and social services.

And many say Poquoson's character as a quaint, quiet, waterfront city remains the same.

"We still have our small-town atmosphere," said Tommie Turner, a member of the anniversary-planning team.

"It's a watermen's village. We are close by to everything, but it's nice to have a rural atmosphere."

This weekend's party, she said, won't approach the city's annual Seafood Festival in size. But it will be true to the city's roots nonetheless.

"This is just sort of a little, homespun celebration of Poquoson people," she said.

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Stop by Poquoson Middle School between 6 and 8:30 p.m. for the Art and Science Festival and Ice Cream Social. Students from kindergarten through 12th grade will display their artwork and science projects, read their poetry and essays, and give tours of the school. Roving musicians will perform. Ice cream sundaes will be available for a $1 donation.

SATURDAY

Volunteers have planned for food and fun in the Municipal Park area. Free parking available at Poquoson High School. Handicap parking available on Municipal

- **Noon-4 p.m.:** Free blood-pressure screenings; sculpture on display.
- **1 p.m.-7 p.m.:** Music acts perform — CrossEyed Youth at 1 p.m., Church Street Band at 2 p.m., Salt Marsh Bluegrass Band at 3 p.m., Poquoson High School Jazz Band at 5 p.m., Poquoson High School Show Choir at 5:45 p.m., Sweet Harmony Family Singing Group at 6:30 p.m.
- **7:15 p.m.:** Remarks by Mayor Helsel.
- **8 p.m.:** Air Force Jazz Band performs.
- **9:15 p.m.:** Fireworks.